

Francis, the Crusades & Islam:

Part I

Presentation 3

I. Francis' 3rd Attempt to “go among Muslims” (1219)

○ A. The General Chapter of 1219

1. A **New Missionary Thrust** is initiated here

a. The **1217 Chapter** had sent the first missions “over the mountains” and “over the seas”

b. Now, **in 1219**, **a three-pronged missionary thrust** was sent out:

Francis' 3rd Attempt (1219)

- i. France (again)
- ii. Germany (again) / Hungary
- iii. The Muslim World: three-pronged mission

Francis' 3rd Attempt (1219)

- aa. **Southern Spain and (eventually Morocco):** Berard and his 5 companions
- bb. **Tunisia:** Brother Giles and a few companions
- cc. **Holy Land (and eventually Damietta, Egypt):** Francis and his companions

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

- 2. . Indeed: we **may have a version of** a kind of **"Farewell Message"** of Francis to the friars at the General Chapter of 1219
 - a. There are **2 Hypotheses** about this text =
 - i. **"Testament of 1219"** = **ER 22, 1-50** (= David Flood)
 - ii. **"Testament of 1219"** = **ER 22: 1-4** (= Cusato)

Early Rule 22: 1-4

- Let all the brothers be attentive to what the Lord says: **“Love your enemies [inimici] and do good to those who hate you”** (Mt. 5, 44). For even the Lord Jesus Christ, whose footsteps we must follow (cf. 1 Pt. 2, 21), called **his betrayer “friend” [amicus]** and freely gave himself up to those who crucified him. Therefore, **all those are our friends [amici]** who unjustly inflict on us trials, anxieties, shame and injuries, suffering and torture, martyrdom and death. We should love them greatly, for **out of what they inflict on us we have eternal life**

Early Rule 22: 1-2a

○ b. Line-by-line highlights or emphases:

○ In **verse 1**, we read the counsel: “love your enemies” [inimici] (cf. Mt. 5, 44);

□ the context = Sermon on the Mount

○ In **verse 2a**, he picks up theme, stating: “the Lord called his betrayer” = friend [amicus]

○ the one in the Garden of Gethsemane

○ Judas = the one who would hand him over to death = **the enemy** par excellence

Early Rule 22: 1-4

- In **verse 2b**, Francis says of Jesus: “**He gave himself up to those who would torture and crucify him**” = possibility of harm or even death
- In **verse 3**, he claims: “those are our **friends** [*amici*] who unjustly harm, torture or even kill us”; [= those who do us harm are yet somehow our “friends”]
- In **verse 4**: “we should love them greatly, for **out of what they inflict on us we have eternal life**”

Francis is here evoking Judas:

Matthew 26: 49-50

“And he came up to Jesus at once and said to him: ‘Hail, Master!’ And he kissed him. And Jesus said to him: ‘Friend (*amicus*), why are you here?’ Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him (Mt 26, 49-50).”



Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

c. What is the meaning of these 4 verses?

- ❖ The one whom you (and almost everyone, including the Church) believes is your “enemy” (= *inimicus* = the **Muslim/**
the Infidel) is really your “friend”

Francis' 3rd Attempt (1219)

❖ But, *Amicus*...

- is not to be understood in terms of **sentiment or feeling** = “your buddy”
- but rather, in the Franciscan lexicon, as “frater” (= **brother or sister**)

*THIS IS THE LEGACY
OF
HIS ENCOUNTER
WITH LEPERS*



Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

- d. **To Recap:** Francis, *in this farewell message*, is telling the friars why he is going to Egypt:
 - i. **To show Muslims**, by his own life and example, that even the one whom the Church calls “infidel” and “enemy” is a brother or a sister to him

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

- ii. This conviction was grounded in the revelation given to him during his encounter with the lepers: **that all – without exception – (even the so-called infidels!) are brothers and sisters of the same Creator God**

Bringing together the Threads

The Foundation of his Conversion (= Leper Experience)

makes possible

Its Fruition in the Encounter (= Embrace of All as *Frater*)

even of the “Infidel” = the Muslim Other

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

iii. This is the testimony he is willing to die for = **this** is Francis' so-called "**desire for martyrdom**"

aa. One thing: to go seeking to be martyred (= type of Xian masochism)

bb. Another thing to: to be willing to accept the consequences of one's witness

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

iv. And, if he is faithful to this insight of the meaning of the lepers (= the **core insight of his vocation**), he – like we who are faithful to *our* vows – will be granted **life eternal**!

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

- B. To the East: **Francis and the Fifth Crusade** (1219-20)
 - 1. Controversial Question Today: **did Francis oppose the crusade?**

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

- a. The Prevailing Opinion of **crusade historians** is: **he was in favor of the crusade** or at least neutral to it
 - i. "Francis was a man of his time"; "most Christians were for it..."
 - ii. "Crusades were, after all, sponsored by the papacy..."

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

- b. Truth be told: it is difficult to prove either way (pro or con):

each position is based on a set of assumptions

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

c. But there are **three main arguments in favor of Francis' opposition to the crusade:**

- i. What he learned in his encounter with lepers (= the missing element in virtually all treatments by crusade historians): **the universal fraternity of all creatures!** **No More Bloodshed!** ✓

Francis' Third Attempt (1219)

ii. The Account found in **2 Celano 30**

iii. The Strange Absence of **the Tau**

2 Celano 30

How He Foretold the Massacre of Christians at Damietta

When the Christian army was besieging Damietta, the holy man of God was there with his companions, since they had crossed the sea in their fervor for martyrdom. When the holy man heard that our forces were preparing for war, on the **day** of battle he grieved deeply.

2 Celano 30

- He said to his companion: “If the battle happens **on this day, the Lord has shown me that it will not go well for the Christians**. But if I say this [to them], they will take me for a fool, and if I keep silent my conscience will give me no rest. What do you think I should do? His companion replied: “Father, don’t give the least thought to how people judge you. This wouldn’t be the first time people took you for a fool! So unburden your conscience, and fear God rather than other human beings.”

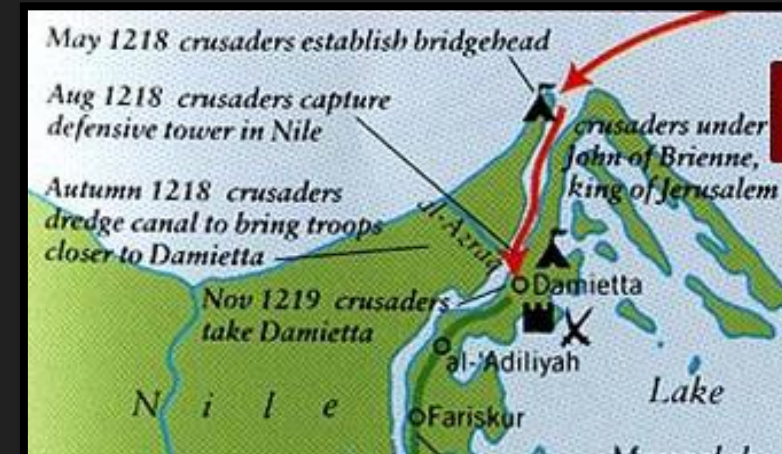
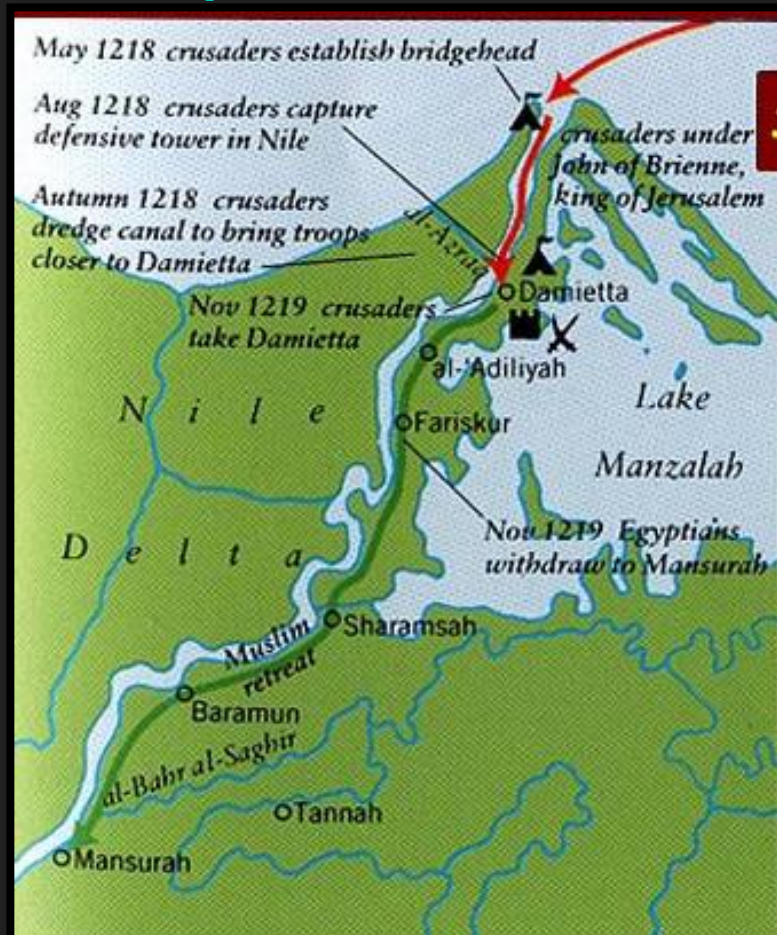
2 Celano 30

So the saint leapt to his feet, and rushed out towards the Christians crying out warnings to save them, **forbidding war and threatening disaster**. But they took the truth *as a joke*. They *hardened* their *hearts* and refused to turn back. They charged, they attacked, they fought, and then the enemy struck back.

Battle at Damietta (August 1219)



Battle at Damietta (August 1219)



2 Celano 30

In that moment of battle, filled with dread, the holy man made his companion *get up to look*. The first and second time he got up, he saw nothing, so Francis told him to look a third time. What a sight! **The whole Christian army was in *retreat fleeing from the battle, resulting*** not in triumph but in shame. The massacre was so great that between the dead and the captured the number of our forces was diminished by six thousand. Compassion for them, no less than regret, drove the holy man; for what they had done overwhelmed them...

2 Celano 30 (end)

*Let the princes of the whole world
take note of this,
and let them know:*

it is not easy to fight against God.

that is, against ***the will of the Lord***,
stubborn insolence usually ends in disaster...

2 Celano 30

❖ Summary of the Account:

- ❑ It is the story of the presence of Francis and his companion (Illuminato) at the ill-fated attack by the crusaders of the sultan al-Malik al-Kamil's encampment out on the plain south of Damietta (August 29, 1219)

2 Celano 30

- ❑ Francis had warned them not to go to battle **“on this day”** or risk being defeated
- ❑ They **disregarded his warning** and they were catastrophically routed
- ❑ Celano adds a moral to the story: **“it is not easy to fight against the will of God!”**

2 Celano 30

❖ Traditional Understanding of this Passage:

❑ Francis prophesied the defeat of the crusaders;

- And it happened just as he had **predicted it**;
- Thus, once again, Francis shows himself to be a saint, in unique communication with God

❑ *Is the implied moral of the story, then: if they had gone out on another day they would have had success??*

2 Celano 30

❖ But there is another way to look at this passage:

- ❑ **Celano knows something:** namely, that Francis was, in fact, opposed to the bloodshed of the crusade and tried to dissuade the crusaders from engaging in battle
- ❑ Celano conveys this understanding by constructing an account that operates
 - on 2 levels (one obvious and one hidden); and
 - using 2 categories within the story:

2 Celano 30

○ Prophecy:

- Prophecy **as prediction** of future events; or
- Prophecy **as a challenge to return to the covenant!***

○ Time:

- **Chronological time** (**chronos**): days, weeks, months = go out today, "on this day"; or
- **Christological time** (**kairos**): the fullness of time = "the day of the Lord" (this is the day the Lord has made) = **life in Christ Jesus**

2 Celano 30

○ Regarding the theme of Time:

- Celano is alluding to the traditional rally cry of the crusaders, initiated by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the 1140s for the 2nd Crusade, that uses time as its theme: “Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor 6: 2)

2 Celano 30

- There are two kinds of time:
 - **CHRONOS** = enumerated time / chronological time (days, weeks, months, years...)
 - **KAIROS** = time “in Christ” = time lived in the manner of Christ

2 Celano 30

- ❖ Celano is going to **subtly** turn Bernard's rally cry on its head:
 - If one is truly living in **kairos** (= in conformity with the life of Christ and will of God), **now is no longer the acceptable time!**
 - Go out to battle "on this day" (**= contrary to the values of the Gospel**) and you will indeed be defeated!

2 Celano 30

□ As Celano editorializes at the end of his text:

*“Let the princes of the whole world take note of this and let them know: it is not easy to fight against God, that is **against the will of the Lord** [=kairos]. Stubborn insolence usually **ends in disaster.**”*

2 Celano 30

□ Why is Celano is making this point now?

- a -- Celano wrote his *Second Life* in **1246-1247** = just when **Louis IX**, King of France, was conscripting the Franciscans to accompany him on new crusade against Islam in Egypt (**to Damietta!**).
- He is thus warning the friars: **if you go out and contribute to further bloodshed** (**against the Muslims in 1248**), it is:
 - **contrary to the charism of Francis**
 - **contrary to the values of the Gospel**

Francis and the 5th Crusade

○ iii. Francis and the (Non) Use of the Tau

- The **Fourth Lateran Council** (1215) announced **three aims** for its work:
 - The calling of a new crusade (Fifth) to retake Holy Land
 - The rooting out of heresy (= Cathars)
 - The reform of the Church and of each Christian

The Tau

- ❑ In his opening sermon (on the Passover), Pope Innocent III associated each of the **three conciliar aims** with the symbol of **the Tau**



The Tau

- ❑ Tau was the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet
- ❑ Drawn from **Ezekiel 9**, in Hebrew, it looked like an “**X**”
- ❑ But its transliteration into Greek rendered it more like a sloping “**T**”
- ❑ As such, **the Tau** was roughly akin to the shape of **a cross (of Christ)**

The Tau



Source of the Symbol = Ezekiel 9: 4, 6b

- “Pass through the city [of Jerusalem] and mark an **X** on the foreheads of those who *moan and groan* over all the abominations that are practiced within it... but do not touch any of those marked with the **X**.”

Further Proof of Opposition: The Tau

- ◎ As such, **the Tau** could be a sign of a number of things:
 - Protection
 - Righteousness / Holiness
 - Conversion unto Salvation

The TAU

at Lateran IV

- **First Conciliar Aim: the Fifth Crusade**
- **Second Conciliar Aim: Reaffirmation of the Reality of the Eucharist**
- **Third Conciliar Aim: Spiritual Conversion = Personal Moral Reform & Institutional Reform**

- **Sign of the Crusade:** the taking of the **cross** to Jerusalem
- **Sign of the Eucharist:** the celebration of the paschal mystery on the **cross** at Mass
- **Sign of Conversion:** the daily taking up of the **cross** and daily living like Christ

(1) Crusaders = “Crucesignati”

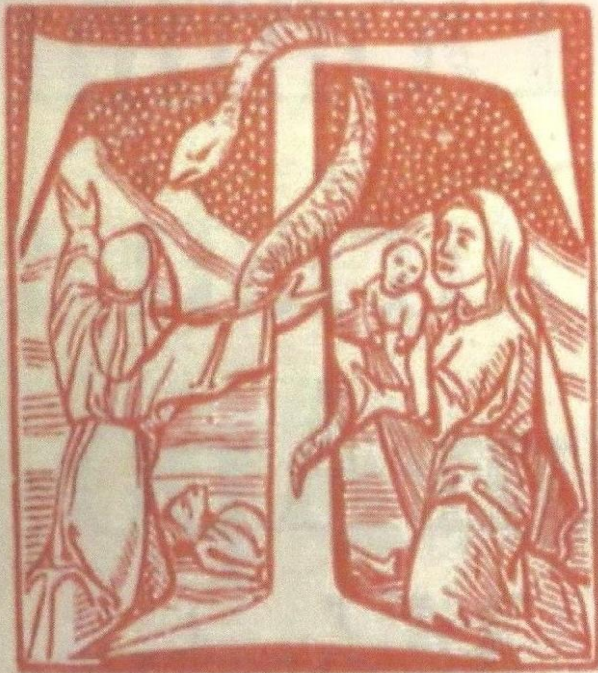


(1) **Crusaders** = “Crucesignati”



(2) “Te igitur...”

(The Roman Canon)



e igitur, cle-
mentissime
Pater, per
Jesum Christum Fi-

(3) **Tau** as Sign of Conversion

- ❑ For Francis, the **Tau Cross** would become for him the preeminent sign of personal conversion / conversion of the heart = 3rd aim of Council
 - Indeed, he used **the Tau** as a kind of personal signature = sign of his own vocation to do penance and the calling of others to do penance as well
 - As such, the Tau was the preeminent sign of preserving whole and intact the universal fraternity of all creatures

The Tau



(2) **Tau** as Sign of the Eucharist

- ❑ In his writings (after 1220), Francis would **also champion devotion to and care of the Eucharist** = 2nd aim of the Council



The Tau

- ❑ But Francis **never once** – ever! – wrote about or championed the **crusades** in his writings!



German knights of the Teutonic Order confront heavily-armoured Mongol horse-warriors at the Battle of Liegnitz, 1241.

The Tau

- He couldn't: **the whole notion of bloodshed and killing was, For him, a violation of the universal fraternity of all creatures!**
- And such actions were, for him, **completely antithetical** to the holiness **demanding by the Gospel** and **the life of penance** which had been revealed to him and which he had embraced

The Tau

- ❑ As a result, Francis **never** uses **the Tau** in association with the crusade:
 - even though it was **the papal and conciliar sign** of the crusade;
 - One can thus say that: **his refusal to use the Tau in the context of the crusades** was a kind of **silent protest** against **this** Crusade – and **even all Crusades** as destructive of the sacred human fraternity
 - Thus: one of the primary reasons he went to Egypt in 1219 was to oppose it!